

LOCALIZING MODERN SUBJECT IN HARYANVI
FOLKLORE:
A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Introduction: Folklore is a record of the local elements of modernity. In this paper the narrative of modernity is drawn from Haryanvi folklore. This folkloric account of modernity as a move towards justice and rights gives a different dimension to the grand discourse of modernity. Methods and materials: In this article, a few items from Haryanvi folklore - one folk dance, one folk joke and one real-life performer's experiences-are being referred to to locate consciousness of justice and rights as the markers of modernity among the folk personae and performers in Haryanvi culture. Analysis: It focuses on the change of cultural institutions and interactions between communities. It analyses the rules, systems and values that underpin development. Results: The folklore items referred to in this article depict Haryanvi society as passing through a phase of self-renewing and self-transformation. And mobility is the primary harbinger of modernity as it brings different cultures in contact and provides a person a critical perspective to view one's culture and society.

Key words: *modern folklore, genres, cultural institutions, Haryanvi*

ԹԵՄԱՏԻԿԱՅԻ ՏԵՂԱՅՆԱՑՈՒՄԸ ՀԱՐՅԱՆՎԻ
ԱՐԴԻ ԲԱՆԱՀՅՈՒՍՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՋ.
ՀԱՅԵՑԱԿԱՐԳԱՅԻՆ ՎԵՐԼՈՒԾՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

Կումար Դևենդեր

Բանարաս Հինդուի համալսարան, Վարանասի
Հնդկաստան

Ամփոփում

Նախաբան. Այս հոդվածում դիտարկված է Հարյանվիի արդի բանահյուսությունը: Արդի բանահյուսական այս նկարագրությունը՝ որպես դեպի արդարություն և իրավունքներ ուղղված շարժում, ևս մեկ հարթակ է ավելացնում արդիականության մեծ բանավեճին: Մեթոդներ և նյութեր. Դիտարկվում են Հարյանվիի ֆոլկլորից մի քանի նմուշներ՝ մեկ ժողովրդական պար, մեկ ժողովրդական կատակ և մեկ կատարում՝ բացահայտելու արդարության և իրավունքների գիտակցությունը՝ Հարյանվի մշակույթի բանահյուսության հերոսների և կատարողների շրջանում որպես արդիականության նշաններ: Վերլուծություն. Ուշադրության կենտրոնում են մշակութային ինստիտուտների փոփոխությունը և համայնքների միջև փոխգործակցությունը: Վերլուծված են զարգացման հիմքում ընկած կանոնները, համակարգերը և արժեքները: Արդյունքներ. Հոդվածում հիշատակված բանահյուսությունը ներկայացնում է Հարյանվիի հասարակությունը որպես ինքնավերականգնման և ինքնակազմակերպման փուլ: Իսկ շարժունակությունը արդիականության գլխավոր ազդարարն է, քանի որ այն շփման մեջ է բերում տարբեր մշակույթներ և մարդուն տալիս է քննադատական հայացք ազգային մշակույթի և հասարակության նկատմամբ:

Բանալի բառեր՝ արդի բանահյուսություն, ժանրեր, մշակութային ինստիտուտներ, Հարյանվի

ЛОКАЛИЗАЦИЯ ТЕМАТИКИ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ ФОЛЬКЛОРЕ ХАРЬЯНВИ: КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ

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Аннотация

Введение: В статье повествование о современности взято из фольклора Харьянви. Это фольклорное описание современности как движения к справедливости и правам, придает иное измерение великому дискурсу современности. **Методы и материалы:** В этой статье рассмотрены несколько образцов из фольклора Харьянви - один народный танец, одна народная шутка и одно исполнение, чтобы определить сознание справедливости и прав, как маркеры современности среди фольклорных персонажей и исполнителей в культуре Харьянви. **Анализ:** Основное внимание уделяется изменению культурных институтов и взаимодействию между сообществами. Анализируются правила, системы и ценности, лежащие в основе развития. **Результаты:** Фольклорные произведения, упомянутые в этой статье, изображают общество Харьянви как проходящее через фазу самообновления и самопреобразования. А мобильность является основным предвестником современности, поскольку она приводит в контакт различные культуры и дает человеку критический взгляд на свою культуру и общество.

Ключевые слова: *современный фольклор, жанры, институты культуры, Харьянви*

INTRODUCTION: Modernity is taken as “the period of the new,” and to be modern is “to be constantly confronted by the new” [7, p. 46, 48]. Kant as a critic of modernity finds beneath the chaos of routine life a ‘plan’ (what Lyotard calls a ‘grand narrative’) which projects a rational future. In that future, people will determine their own destinies and estab-

lish systems and institutions which will ensure the development of an egalitarian human society. Habermas points out three key aspects of the discourse of modernity: emancipation of subjectivity from mystical and religious world views; the idea of history as the story of the rational progress of humanity; and possibilities of the resistance to the commodification of daily life. As such ‘modernity’ precludes the clash between the old and the new for renewal through conflict, contradiction and disintegration. According to Marshal Berman, modernity “pours us into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air” [1, p.15]. As such modernity can be identified with humankind’s striving for continual progress as it emphasizes the value-oriented culture of people.

If reason and intellect are to be taken as modern elements, then modernity can be said to have begun with Industrial Revolution. But if modernity is taken as the awareness of sense of justice and rights, it is as old as human history is. It is in the latter sense that Jameson calls modernity “not a concept but rather a narrative category” [4, p. 94]. In this sense, folklore narratives are a record of the local elements of modernity which strive for continual renewal of the social and cultural systems in the light of new experiences. This folkloric account of modernity as a move towards justice and rights focuses on the change of cultural institutions and interactions between communities. It analyses the rules, systems and values that underpin development. In this article, three items from Haryanvi folklore - a folk dance, a folktale and a real-life performer’s experiences - have been discussed to locate consciousness of justice and rights as the markers of modernity among the folk personae and performers in Haryanvi culture. The folktale is about robbing of a traveller by the chieftain of a village where the former stays for night: That very night, his mare gives birth to a foal; in the morning, the host puts his claims on the foal by saying that the traveller did not have it when he came last evening. The matter is brought before the chieftain who is kin of the host; the chieftain slyly twists the argument in favour of the host by invoking the sense of justice. The dismayed traveller mocks at the chieftain’s sense of justice, but the latter ignores the satire and disposes of

the traveller's case abruptly. In the folk dance, a young woman, who is hell-bound to jump out of the matrimonial bond, challenges her in-laws not to try to keep her in their fold by alluring her with precious gifts. In the third instance, a female mourner asserts her right as a leader of the mourning procession at the death of a person by deciding on her own whom to mourn at during the procession in spite of the objections raised by the family of the deceased.

Haryana is one of the states of India lying in the northern parts of the country. The Haryanvi **society** reflected in its folklore can be described as a traditional, agrarian society practicing *Jajmani* system to meet its requirements. The term "traditional" refers to those societies that practice indigenous and often ancient cultural practices based on myths and legends without any rational and scientifically verifiable basis. An "agrarian" society is one relying for its subsistence on the cultivation of crops through the use of plows and draft animals. Most members of agrarian societies are peasants. They are the primary producers, the persons who farm the land from day to day. A minority of the population engages itself in specialized, full-time roles (such as blacksmith, carpenter or barber). These artisans trade their skills for agricultural produce. In these societies, production is mostly for subsistence and not for market. Power is shared on the basis of kinship. Community is always preferred over the individual. Taboos and rules exercising informal control over society are based on mythologies and not on logic. **Jajmani system** is a system of reciprocal social and economic arrangements between families of different castes within a village community in India, by which one family exclusively performs certain services for the other, such as ministering to the ritual or providing agricultural labour, in return for pay, protection, and employment security. These relations are supposed to continue from one generation to the next, and payment is normally made in the form of a fixed share in the harvest rather than in cash. The patron family itself can be the client of another whom it patronizes for certain services and by whom it is in turn patronized for other services.

Modernity is marked by loss of faith in mythologies that has hitherto provided all-encompassing explanations of nature, morality and experience. the Indian myth of the origin of different castes from different parts

of Brahma, and that of the man being superior to woman are the cornerstones of any Indian folk belief. However, Haryanvi folk subvert these myths and put a challenge to them through their performances and experiences. They force the society to re-examine the question what is it to be human, in the light of their new experiences. This paper focuses on "subjectivity" as one of the three central categories to Habermas' depiction of modernity. The subject is the 'I' that experiences, conceptualizes and interacts with the world and partakes in and reflects upon the change. The 'subject' is taken as an agent of change as well as "a ground in which to anchor truth, justice and beauty" [7, p. 52]. The subject, the 'I' that experiences, conceptualizes and interacts with the world, is a central category of the modern thought. As such it is the bearer of responsibilities and rights, a member of society and a free acting agent of change. This modernist notion of the subject gives it a sense of the power to determine its own conditions of existence. Such an account of subjectivity initiates a revolutionary break from the traditional world-views to establish a new understanding of the basis of thought and action. The change in Haryanvi society is to be understood from the perspective of these modern subjects. It is the subject who actually experiences and meditates upon change. Subjectivity is the growth in consciousness engendered through the interactions with others in performances as well as in real life.

In Haryanvi society, one's social position is determined by two factors: caste and sex. Women and low-born people are the marginalized sections in this tradition-bound society. Women have been forbidden traditionally to own property, to engage in politics, to pursue education. This agrarian society exercises very tight controls over female sexuality. Men demand premarital virginity on the part of girls, and premarital and extramarital sex on the part of women is severely punished, even including the murder of the offending woman by her kinsmen. Women are viewed as immature, and in need of male protection and supervision, and these conceptions have been deeply embedded in agrarian religion, morality, and law. Similarly kinship ties are manipulated to exercise coercive power over the other-, especially the low-, caste people. In other words, Haryanvi society like any other traditional, agrarian society has been the most consistently, thoroughly, and intensively male supremacist and caste-conscious. A long

tradition of segregation on the basis of sex and caste has developed into an elaborate ideology celebrating the “natural” superiority of males over females and those of the upper-caste over the low-caste people.

The folklore items referred to in this article depict Haryanvi society as passing through a rudimentary phase of transformation. The subjects - one, gendered (a woman), another, caste (low-born man) and the third one, caste-gendered (a low-born female mourner) - appearing in the folklore items discussed here put a challenge to the irrational traditions and discriminatory equations reigning in the traditional, agrarian Haryanvi society and deciding their relationship with the elite in that society. These subjects appear to be fighting against a society rooted in medieval traditions and customs. These subjects have been identified in these items as a peasant woman, a mare-owning *Mirasi* and a professional mourner known as *Mirasani*. The way these subjects become aware of their rights and claims to natural justice is suggested through their typical subject-positions in the society. Mobility is the mantra leading to the instilling of modern consciousness in them as it brings different cultures in contact and provides a person a critical perspective to view one's culture and society. While the mare-owning *Mirasi* in the folktale is literally a traveler visiting far and distant places, the female performers in the folk dance and the other one as a professional mourner too enjoy comparatively a more mobile life in comparison to women in a typically traditional society. The need of more and more hands to do field-work compels men to allow their women to come out of the four-walls of their houses. No doubt it puts extra-burden on women; nonetheless it makes them bolder than typically traditional women in the society; their more vocal cry against the sexual injustices practiced by society is an issue to be taken into account in this regard. The professional mourner too enjoys the benefits of being a professional much in demand on certain occasions. She manipulates her situation to create an autonomous space for herself even in such a rigid and chauvinistic society. The importance of their mobile positions in instilling in them a sense of modernity becomes discernible when one looks at the pathetic lot of women who hardly leave their homes, or the low-caste people who hardly go outside their village. In this way, moving out of the claustrophobic ambience of the village in one case and that of the house in the other two cases induce modern awareness among the subjects.

The selected modern subjects here refuse to see themselves as the subjectivities constructed externally by any mystical, religious, irrational ideology. They rather ask for the logic behind these discriminatory traditions through their performances. Women challenge the irrational idea of male supremacy. They make fun of the patriarchal sexual ideology. They do not find any rationale behind such ideology especially when they demand logic. It puts them in the position of modern subjects. They not only challenge that ideology as something irrational but by desiring for the body of an outsider male also transgress one of its most important tenets. For instance, the woman dancing on a folk song challenges her patriarchal masters to contain her within the so-called sacred walls of married life in spite of their utmost cajoling and allurements. She rather says explicitly that she cannot be held captive by alluring her with expensive garments and jewelry. She tells them she is not going to stay with them any longer. The performer questions the society's expectation of her unwavering devotion to her husband and blind love for her children by keeping her sense of renunciation and forgiveness alive in popular consciousness. The other performer smashes the myth of fair skin as the marker of beauty by highlighting the glamour of her black skin during her performance. She challenges the illogicality of such demands and rather glorifies her dark skin. Another woman - a professional mourner - turns out to be assertive while justifying the way she mourns the dead in her real life. She asserts that nobody can dictate her the terms in this regard. If anybody tries to do it, she questions their rationale and threatens to leave the performance. Another folk figure - the mare-owning *Mirasi*, a low-caste entertainer - too challenges the village Head in his own suggestive ways as he finds the latter's traditional morality lacking in natural justice. These performers question collectively the idea that there are eternal truths and transcendent structures that organize reality, and in their turn demand the reconstruction of reality based on rights and justice.

High-caste elites have always needed coercive power to keep low-caste labourers, peasants, artisans and tribal groups in place. To maintain his hold over the produce of any kind, the chieftain in the folktale invokes the primitive rule to keep the foal. The *Mirasi* resents it in his own way. These subjects challenge the traditional morality and ideology of the dom-

inant elite and strive to gain some control over their lives. They challenge the discourses that govern their social interactions. They bring in the changes or at least perform them through folklore - the changes that perpetually dissolve any sense of stability or tradition that might force people to bow before it unquestioningly. The change these folklore items suggest may not be rapid but it is inevitable and continual. Haryanvi folk performers subvert the traditional myths providing all-encompassing explanations of nature, morality and experience, and put a challenge to them through their performances. They force the authorities to re-examine the question what it is to be human in the light of their new experiences. A lower level of tolerance of injustice can also be read as a feature of modernity. It can be described as an advancement in the modern consciousness of the subjects. Modernity can be taken as a reaction against illegitimate, illegal, irrational domination. The growing consciousness of women and lower castes against traditional domination is an element of modernity. The dominant morality has recourse to the tradition to justify the discriminatory system; but the modern especially young subjects are not silenced.

The question how this local subject is different from the one in dominant western discourse of modernity is worth considering here. The Haryanvi subject still resists too much individualistic perceptions of the self unlike her western counterpart, and rather emphasizes reconciliation and harmony with the rest of the world including men and upper caste people. 'Community consciousness' is the hallmark of the alternate modernity such local subjects try to assert as against the western emphasis on individuality. To place a woman or a low-caste person in a subject position in their history is not necessarily to make them individualistic. The crucial struggle for emancipation in Haryanvi folklore is situated within a much larger network where modernity is obliged to lose its European contours which depend on an exclusive emphasis on individuality. These subaltern subjects especially women have preserved pre-colonial modes of resistance. Their struggle against a patriarchal domination has been overwhelmingly indigenous in its structure. The notion of community is bound up with peasant consciousness as opposed to a bourgeois consciousness. The Haryanvi folklore performs the movement towards the social emancipation of the oppressed sections as a whole and not that of the individual one.

These subjects challenge their rulers - economic, social and political, and strive to gain some control over their lives. They challenge the discourses that govern their social interactions. These subjects hint at the subtle transformation of the everyday lives of individuals and communities. They bring in the changes or at least perform them through folklore, the changes that perpetually dissolve any sense of stability or tradition that might bind people together. This progress of history may not be as "inevitable" as Berman suggests to be able to sweep away one's traditional roots and transport the subject into a radically different future. What Malpas observes applies aptly to the Haryanvi folk: "If changes in culture and society can change human experience, then there is a point in challenging existing structures in order to liberate those who are oppressed or marginalised, and their struggle is a practical social one rather than just an intellectual exercise" [7, p. 54].

CONCLUSION: Any performance in general, and the folk performance in particular, does not offer any precise answers to the problems; it rather raises constructive questions and corrective doubts. It performs resistance as the basic feature of everyday life. It exposes the institutions as something inefficient and implicitly oppressive. According to Habermas, modernity is "the epoch that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future [3, p. 05]. In this regard, folklore evokes anti-hegemonic possibilities. It becomes a site for the subaltern to listen to each other, to speak back to powers that marginalize them, and keep the hope of a more egalitarian society alive till the modernist project of justice for all remains incomplete.

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Տեղեկություններ հեղինակի մասին

Կումար Դևենդեր, պրոֆեսոր, Բանարաս Հինդուի համալսարան
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ԲԱՆԱՍՏԵՂԾԱԿԱՆ ԿԵՐՊԱՐՆԵՐԸ ԿՈՄՊՈԶԻՏՈՐ ԵՐՎԱՆԴ ԵՐԿԱՆՅԱՆԻ ՍՏԵՂԾԱԳՈՐԾՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՋ

Ռիպրա Աղայան

**Երևանի Կոմիտասի անվան պետական կոնսերվատորիայի
Գյումրու մասնաճյուղ
Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն**

Ամփոփում

Նախաբան. Հոդվածը նվիրված է արդի հայ կոմպոզիտորական դպրոցի փայլուն ներկայացուցիչ, կոմպոզիտոր Երվանդ Երկանյանի ստեղծագործության ընդգրկուն թեմաների մեջ ուրույն տեղ զբաղեցրած և բանաստեղծական տեքստերից ներշնչված երաժշտական կերպարներին: Մեթոդներ և նյութեր. Պատմաքննական և երաժշտասական մեթոդներով անդրադարձ է կատարվել Ե.Երկանյանի ստեղծագործության բանաստեղծական կերպարներին՝ դիտարկելով այն կոմպոզիտորի ստեղծագործական ուղու համատեքստում: Վերլուծություն. Դիտարկվել են կոմպոզիտորի ստեղծագործական տարբեր փուլերում ստեղծված վոկալ շարերը: Այս կամ այն գրական տեքստի ընտրությունը պայմանավորված է կոմպոզիտորի աշխարհընկալման և լեզվամտածողության առանձնահատկություններով: Արդյունքներ. Ուսումնասիրվող նյութի գեղարվեստական բովանդակության և ստեղծագործական խնդրի վերլուծությունը հնարավորություն են տալիս առավել բազմակողմ ներկայացնել կոմպոզիտորի ներաշխարհը, նրա երաժշտական մտածողության ինքնատիպությունը, անկրկնելիությունը և տեղը հայ ու համաշխարհային երաժշտության համայնապատկերում:

Բանալի բառեր՝ կոմպոզիտոր, հորինվածք, երաժշտական սյուժե-ծագործություն, Երվանդ Երկանյան, բանաստեղծական կերպարներ, վոկալ շարք